

Book Review | *Althusser el Infinito Adios*

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***Althusser el Infinito Adios*. Emilio De Ipola. Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI Editores Argentina S. A., 2007. pp 238. ISBN 978-987-1220-86-1.**

Through the world of sociology, Emilio de Ipola does not need presentation. His research and legacy precede the excellence as synonymous of good sociology. The present seminal book is based on philosophical trace of Althusser's work, his contradictions, limitations and approaches respecting to the role of ideology in politics fields. Quite aside from the publication of his biography, one might question to what extent it is useful to situate the legacy of Althusser under the lens of scrutiny; why Althusser now? A vast range of scholars consider not only that neo-Marxism is exhausted but also that Althusser ignored the pervasive nature of ideology, as something else than a mechanism of capitalist societies. His complexity and abstraction for dealing with some themes makes, from Althusser, a polemical author that for some reason is always being unearthed again and again. De Ipola adds that understanding Althusser is a way of delving into the contradiction and political tension of his time. A son of the age where he lived, he developed a particular philosophical stance that persisted despite of the passing of years.

De Ipola brilliantly explores the problems of Althusser's text considering that there are some inadequate chronological frameworks, employed to explain one-sided views combined with terms which are not previously defined or turns of minds not duly specified in the development of the research. Paradoxically, the limitations De Ipola highlights in his book, pave the way for interests in Althusser's texts. For worse or better, the project of the French philosopher rests on the thesis that Levi-Strauss's argument was incorrectly formulated simply because history was a process moved by productive forces that lacks subject and boundaries. Since we are all puppets of time, there is no sense in history. The meaning given to history seems to be a simple and biased interpretation structured by the ideological state apparatuses. A staunch enemy of Marxists—people who manipulated the

Marx's theory to conduct a failed revolution—Althusser calls attention to the need to return to the first Marx. However here lies the main contradiction, ideology needs a subject to interpellate; in view of this, real history is not human. Secondly, as De Ipola exhibits, there still is another underlying thesis which faces with the problems of historic materialism. The advance of late Althusser blurs the legacy of earlier one. Starting from the premise the Marxian materialism should be seriously reconstructed, Marxists would have left the ideas of Hegel about the dialectics of economy. Nonetheless, Althusser wanted to re-build the Marxist theory in view of a hard view of science juxtaposed to the philosophy of dialectics. Unfortunately, few envisaged that his proposition was associated to a utopia, thought by brilliant but unskilled intellectuals with few probabilities to be applied in politics. De Ipola convincingly explains that after the 1960s, surely Althusser noted this problem and opted to re-write a new manifest for scientists. In doing so, one of the most important aspects of his work was the dichotomy between ideology and science. Unlike Marx, Althusser believed that materialism required the inception of a new epistemology where science played a pivotal role.

De Ipola is centered to analyze a couple of unpublished texts that lead Althusser to create a bridge between his early and late thought. Basically, access to the unknown Althusser's studies reveals that his inconsistencies were a result of a certain anachronism, linked to the use of terminology and neologisms that were not properly examined. Furthermore, one of the most troubling aspects of Althusser's development was the trivialization of class struggle. Undoubtedly, his reading of Marx engendered a new type of Marxism, enriched by the contributions of others voices, cultures and nations. Fully reformulating the concept of alienation, De Ipola adheres, Althusserian interventions rest on shaky foundations due to some inconsistencies found in the connection of subject and ideology. If the subject, a citizen for example, is circumscribed to the alienation of ideology and state apparatuses, then we may determine that this subject is situated outside the logic of production. In these terms the theory of the subject is impossible, the sense of subject does not even exist. Following this, unlike Sartre, the interpretation of humanism proposed by Althusser is centered in a theory of human beings that rejects praxis. The advance of science denies the ontology of subject. The logic of his discourse is aimed at complementing a set of disordered but powerful ideas, which marked by his tragic biography, illuminate the ways of considering the politics in South America. Many other interesting points and issues invite readers to catch a glimpse of this master-work research where De Ipola describes chapter by chapter, in a polished text, an all-encompassed comprehension of Louis Althusser. For Anglo readers especially, this represents a recommendable book to enrich their existent conceptual framework in the encounter between the subject and ideology. Nevertheless, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that Althusser did not delve into the complicity of Marx in the advance of capitalism. Although Marx had seen the material asymmetries

caused by the capital among human relations, in 1848 he supported the U.S.-led war against Mexico. In this token, Marx was not a revolutionist but a theorist who declared overtly Mexico (1846-1848) would have no opportunity to defeat an industrial nation such as the U.S. Ultimately, Mexico ceded its territories of California, New Mexico and Texas to the U.S. Why did Marx openly state to be in favour of the U.S. in this war? Undoubtedly, the prerogative of Marx was associated to the success of his theory but at some extent, his validation of international U.S. foreign diplomacy entailed his failure to understand the capitalism in its entire dimension. In perspective, the class struggle that marked the evolution of societies would lead, in Marx's mind, humankind to the end of conflicts. Needless to say, this utopian hope was the prerequisite for the hegemony of capitalism. Involuntarily, Marxism paved the ways for the capitalization of human life, reconsidering being the reason for the effects originally denounced. This aspect, widely studied by Weberian scholars, is still not being recognized by Marxists and neo-materialist intellectuals.